



REBUILD IOWA OFFICE (RIO) LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY

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RIO MISSION:

The Rebuild Iowa Office will lead the State of Iowa's efforts to rebuild safer, stronger and smarter in the wake of the 2008 severe storms and catastrophic flooding.

RIO VISION:

We envision a resilient Iowa that will be safe, sustainable and economically strong for its people, reaffirming its ties to the land, rivers, environment and rich cultural history.

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FLOOD SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS HOW IOWA CAN BE BETTER PREPARED FOR FUTURE FLOODS

A flood symposium held Tuesday, March 9 at the State Historical Building, highlighted the conditions which set the stage for historic flooding in 2008, as well as steps Iowa could take to be better prepared for future floods.

The symposium, hosted by the University of Iowa's Center for Global & Regional Environmental Research, brought together leading environmental scientists in the state to discuss how trends in Iowa's precipitation and run-off are resulting in more frequent flood events. Cedar Falls city council member Kamyar Enshayan detailed the steps his community took after 2008 to minimize the impact from future flooding. Rebuild Iowa Office Executive Director Lt. Gen. Ron Dardis gave a brief overview of this year's

proposed disaster recovery legislation. Ecologist Cornelia "Connie" Mutel, a historian and archivist at the University of Iowa College of Engineering, presented the new book entitled "A Watershed Year: Anatomy of the Iowa Floods of 2008." The book, edited by Mutel, is a collection of essays by physical and environmental scientists, hydrologists, economists, public policy experts, engineers and community managers that describes the floods in 2008, discusses what can be learned from the experience and describes how to mitigate future flooding.

Roughly 150 people were in attendance for the symposium.

For more information about the book, published by the



RIO Executive Director Lt. Gen. Ron Dardis speaks at the Flood Symposium held March 9.

University of Iowa Press, visit <http://uiopress.uiowa.edu/books/2010-spring/mutel-water.htm>.

REGIONAL PLANNING FOR A SAFER, STRONGER, SMARTER IOWA

In the months following the 2008 floods, storms and tornadoes, the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission (RIAC) toured the hardest hit areas of the state, asking Iowans how Iowa could rebuild safer, stronger and smarter. These responses, along with the work of hundreds of Iowans volunteering for the RIAC Task Forces, comprised the RIAC's [120-Day Report](#), a series of strong

recommendations with an urgent call to action.

[SF2265](#) directly reflects Recommendation #8 from the report, which states "The state will lead in developing guidance for and support for integrated, regional planning to address recovery and leverage multi-jurisdictional strengths for ongoing initiatives."

This bill does not contain any

mandates for Iowa's communities, but instead establishes a framework which they can choose to follow. It would establish ten smart planning principles that state and local governments may consider when planning, provide guidance for what a city or county comprehensive plan may include, and establish a task force to work on planning improvement

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FOCUSING ON IOWA'S FLOOD PLAINS

After seeing the devastation from the record floods of both 1993 and 2008, Iowans from across the state knew that the state needed to address how it approached flood-prone areas. The important work done by the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission (RIAC) in recommending goals and strategies following the 2008 floods was not the first time such an effort has occurred. In fact, a commission was convened following the 1993 floods to consider action steps that should be taken at the state and federal levels to improve the state's flood preparedness. "[The Floods of 1993: Iowa Flood Disaster Report](#)" was filed in May 1994. It included recommendations regarding flood plain management including:

- Iowa could benefit from an expanded, comprehensive and fully integrated flood plain management program.
- Land use within flood plains needs to be examined and changed where appropriate to uses that are more adaptive to

periodic flooding.

- Reducing vulnerability to future floods is as important as improving disaster relief capabilities and programs.
- The State of Iowa should review the flood plain management responsibility within the state and revise necessary laws to create a viable, effective program with adequate resources.

Almost twenty years later, the same issues are being discussed and the same concerns still exist. However, the stakes have gotten higher. The estimated costs of the 2008 disaster are approximately \$10 billion. To date, \$3.8 billion has been allocated from federal and state dollars.

Recognizing the need to solicit feedback from subject matter experts and the general public before passing flood plain legislation, legislators asked the Water Resources Coordinating Council (WRCC) to develop flood plain

management recommendations for the state prior to the 2010 legislative session. Those recommendations have since generated good policy discussions, but consensus still needs to be reached.

Gerald Galloway, professor at the University of Maryland and leader of the 1993-1994 White House Study of the 1993 Mississippi River floods, wrote a chapter entitled, "The Great Flood of 1993: Did We Learn Any Lessons?" for the new book, "A Watershed Year, Anatomy of the Iowa Floods of 2008."

Galloway reflects on the difficulty of implementing policy changes and asks, "Now, with both Katrina and the Midwest floods of 2008 still on our minds, will we once again avoid the issue? Will we return to business as usual and fail to remember the harsh lessons of our 21st century floods? Will we again leave future generations to deal with the challenges that we should have met?"



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recommendations to be submitted to the Governor and General Assembly on or before Nov. 15, 2010. Its adoption would allow Iowa to become the 48th state to incorporate planning language into its Code, improving the state's chances to receive future federal funding from several agencies.

Tom Watson, Infrastructure Commander with the City of

Palo, has seen the devastation floods can bring when his city was hit by the 2008 floods. Since then, the city has undertaken many projects to mitigate the effects of future flooding, but Watson knows that these efforts may not be enough.

"The City of Palo can only do so much within its city limits," said Watson. "We need to coordinate efforts. Regional planning is so important."

Watson said that communities and entities need to work together to mitigate the effects of future flooding. Currently, there is little guidance on how to do it, but Watson believes SF2265 is the first step. "Regional planning is of the utmost importance. There's action that we all need to take right now [to reduce the risk of future flood damage]."

